

to a great extent my own observations on the migration of birds in Malta. By a singular coincidence, the number of species therein included is the same as that at which my Malta list now stands; but it is, of course, made up of somewhat different elements. It is scarcely to be doubted, however, that most of those regular migrants which have occasionally been taken here, do likewise visit Sardinia more or less frequently, though they may not hitherto have been noticed there. The much greater size of that island does not give it so preponderating an advantage as would at first sight appear, over our little sea-girt rock; for while many rare and adventitious visitors may be easily overlooked in the wilds and forests of Sardinia, here, on the contrary, in this circumscribed spot they are brought, as it were, into a focus; and, as nearly everybody has a gun, and all kinds of birds, from an Eagle to a Nightingale, are sent to the market as "game," comparatively few, even of the rarest, escape notice. It is to be hoped that Dr. Salvadori's excellent catalogue will incite other close observers, like himself, to form similar catalogues for other parts of the Mediterranean. I may, however, remark that he gives, incidentally, a list of the rarities in the collection of Signor Negri, at Genoa, including a specimen of *Actiturus longicaudus* taken there in October 1859, making, with that recorded by me (*Ibis*, 1869, p. 247), the seventh* occurrence of this American species in Europe.

XXXVIII.—*Notes on some Old-World species of Passerine Birds.* H. B. TRISTRAM, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S., &c.

I HAVE lately received some very interesting series of Indian *Passerine* birds from my friend and zealous ornithological colleague, Mr. W. G. Brooks, C.E., which throw light on the geographical distribution of several species.

First I find that, as Mr. Blyth had previously noted (*Ibis*, 1867, p. 24), *Phyllopneuste rama* (Sykes) is apparently identical with *Sylvia caligata*, Licht., and *S. scita*, Eversm., a bird which evidently winters in India and breeds in Northern Asia; but Mr. Blyth at the same time suggested that possibly *Hypolais*

* [M. Gerbe (*Orn. Eur.* ii. p. 210) mentions an *eighth* killed in Picardy.—Ed.]

elaica might also be identical. On comparison, however, I find this to be very distinct. By some oversight the measurement of the length of the tarsus has been exaggerated in Temminck's description of *S. caligata*, a mistake exactly followed by all subsequent compilers of books on European Birds. I find my own Siberian specimen as well as those in the British Museum agree with my Indian series in their measurements.

On examining Mr. Gould's collection, which, as is his wont, he kindly and readily allowed me to study at leisure, I find that he has possessed for many years, under the name of *Sylvia scita*, Eversm., Mr. Hume's new species of *Calamodyta agricolensis* (*suprà*, p. 182). I hope Mr. Hume will forgive me for not adopting his new genus, however well marked may be the species which he and Mr. Brooks have discriminated.

Mr. Brooks has also sent what he considers the common Indian *Locustella*. The specimen proves the correctness of Mr. Jerdon's conjecture that it is distinct from the European species, although his provisional name (B. Ind. ii. p. 160), *L. temporalis*, must go, since it turns out to be, as Mr. Blyth suggested it possibly might (Ibis, 1867, p. 20), *L. hendersoni*, Cassin, = *L. macropus*, Swinhoe, and is identical with the Chinese bird.

Specimens, received from Siberia and the Amoor, of *Accentor montanellus*, Temm., confirm the belief expressed by Middendorff (Sib. Reise, ii. p. 172) that *A. temmincki*, Brandt, would prove identical with *A. montanellus*, Temm. My winter-shot specimen exactly corresponds with the coloration of Dr. Brandt's bird, having the supercilia and breast whitish instead of buff, while the breeding-plumage of another specimen is exactly that figured by Mr. Gould and described by Temminck. It is at least a consolation to perplexed lovers of the *Sylviidae* that they need not any longer be harassed by doubts as to which third species of *Accentor* is entitled to a place in the European list, as the same species ranges from east to west of Northern Asia.

Mr. Brooks has sent me several skins of *Sylvia* marked by him *S. affinis*. He states in his letter that he has never met with but one of the group in India, and doubts the existence of a second species, *S. curruca*, in India. His specimens are a trifle larger than our *S. curruca*, but do not reach the dimensions

given by Mr. Jerdon (B. Ind. ii. p. 209) for *S. affinis*. There is one constant distinction between them and our bird—the outer tail-feathers are nearly all pure white, and the others tipped with pure white. In European specimens the white is of much less extent, and is never pure, but rather greyish white. Palestine examples agree with British, not with Indian, in this respect.

In my notice of the occurrence of *Sylvia melanopogon*, Temm., in India (*suprà*, p. 301), *Amnicola melanopogon*, Gerb., is printed as a synonym. But M. Gerbe's generic name cannot be allowed to stand, as it has been appropriated for many years to a well-known genus of fluviatile mollusks. If the species be entitled to generic distinction, Mr. Gray's name of *Lusciniola* must be accepted, though I cannot with him include in the same group *L. lanceolata*, Temm., which seems to me an undoubted typical *Locustella*.

For a similar reason Mr. Hume's genus *Jerdonia* (*loc. cit.*) must be rejected, as it too has been already appropriated to a molluscan group.

I may take this opportunity of correcting a mistake in synonymy by Dr. von Heuglin in his very useful 'Ornithologie Nordost Afrikas.' He there gives (i. pp. 303, 304) the name of *Sylvia melanocephala minor* to the East-African and Syrian forms, which he makes equivalent to *Curruca momus*, H. and Ehr., = *C. luctuosa*, Brehm (Vogelf. p. 229), = *Melizophilus nigricapillus*, Cab. (Mus. Hein. i. p. 35). But he also identifies it with my *Sylvia bowmani* (Ibis, 1867, p. 85), from which it is very clearly distinct. Dr. von Heuglin must have overlooked my diagnosis, or he could not have thus united the form with the well-known bird described by Hemprich and Ehrenberg, which occurs through all Syria and Egypt, while *S. bowmani* is confined to the Dead-Sea basin, and is only known by two specimens.

There is a new *Saxicola* described in the same work (p. 350), *S. finschi*, which I am unable to discriminate from *S. libanotica*; the latter is not included by Dr. von Heuglin, though I have obtained it from Egypt. Of course without a type-specimen by me, it is impossible to dogmatize; and the imperfect condition in which Hemprich and Ehrenberg's work has been left renders the identification of many of their species almost hopeless.

I have been not a little surprised at the identification of *Ixus nigricans* of South Africa with *I. xanthopygius*, H. & Ehr., to which Mr. Sharpe has called attention in his recent review (*suprà*, p. 432). I possess a large series both of Palestine and Cape specimens, and two from the east coast of Africa: the most cursory glance is sufficient to decide the distinctness of the northern and southern birds. Equally erroneous, as Mr. Sharpe has observed (*suprà*, p. 430), are the identifications comprised under *Sylvia nana*, H. & Ehr. *S. nana* is not clearly described by Hemprich. But *S. delicatula*, Hartl., and *S. deserticola*, mihi, both of which I have before me, are widely different—the median rectrices of the former being bright chestnut, of the latter the whole of the rectrices of an uniform brown-black.

I trust I am not given to unnecessary “splitting” in ornithology; but there is yet another identification of Dr. von Heuglin’s to which I must demur, although it has been confirmed by Mr. Sharpe (*loc. cit.*), for which perhaps I am partly responsible, viz. *Aedon galactodes* with *A. familiaris*. Not only is it impossible to overlook the difference in size, even if we could get over the grey back and still darker head, while the head of *A. galactodes* is one-coloured with the back; but the white patch at the extremity of the tail-feathers is much narrower in *A. familiaris*, while the black bar behind the white is double the width of that of *A. galactodes*.

While upon North-African birds, were I a “splitter,” I should be strongly tempted to describe the *Cinclus aquaticus* of Mount Atlas as a distinct species. This bird is exceedingly rare. Loche only obtained two specimens, which are in the Museum of Algiers, and have not been compared with European specimens. I never saw the bird in life in Algeria; and the only other specimen I know of was shot by Mr. J. H. Gurney, Jun., in his recent expedition to North Africa, and by him most kindly presented to me.

In coloration it exactly coincides with the true *C. aquaticus*, but in size it is as follows:—whole length 5·75 in., wing 2·9, tail 1·9, bill from gape ·65.

The measurements of the British bird are:—whole length 7 inches, wing 3·25, tail 2·25, bill from gape ·75.

Should it be determined to be distinct, I propose for it the name of

CINCLUS MINOR.

I have long had in my possession, from Mysore, a giant Stonechat in summer plumage, very brightly coloured, which had often puzzled me. I lately received from my friend Mr. Brooks a specimen of the same bird in winter plumage, given him by Mr. Jerdon, who procured it in the Sutlej valley. I have had the pleasure of introducing Mr. Jerdon to his old friend, which he at once recognized; and it was evident the two specimens belonged to the same species, hitherto undescribed. I propose to name it

PRATINCOLA ROBUSTA, sp. n.

P. maxima, coloribus *P. pastori* simillima, sed intensioribus; pectore intense rufo, abdomine rufo nec albido; striga nuchali angusta.

Long. tot. 5·95, alæ 3, caudæ 2·45 poll.

It is thus very much larger than any known species of *Pratincola*. It may be further discriminated from *P. pastor* and *P. sibilata* by the intensity of its rufous breast extending down to the abdomen without any white; and also from these and from *P. rubicola* by the very narrow white spot on each side of the neck instead of the bold white patch, while in the breeding-plumage the black of the head and back is most intense. I am very fortunate to have the decided authority of Mr. Jerdon for describing this most interesting bird as new. Its size is the more remarkable when contrasted with the small *P. indica*.

May I lastly remark, to bring these desultory notes to a conclusion, that *Drymæca anchietæ*, Bocage (Jorn. Sc. Lisboa, 1868, p. 41), which has been identified by Dr. Hartlaub (Bericht u. s. w. 1869, p. 126) with *Chatops grayi*, Sharpe (P. Z. S. 1869, p. 163, pl. 14), is also identical with *Sphenæacus pycnopygius*, Sclater (Contrib. Ornith. 1852, p. 148, pl. 102), so that this rare bird has had the good fortune to be thrice described and twice figured*!

* [M. Jules Verreaux, who has lately examined the type of this species, now in the Strickland Collection at Cambridge, is of opinion that it cannot properly be included in any one of the genera to which it has been referred, and that probably a new genus should be established for its reception.—ED.]